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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0272  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 007088

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SUBJECT: FARC INAUGURATION DAY VIOLENCE

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON. FOR REASON: 1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: ON AUGUST 7, PRESUMED MEMBERS OF THE FARC'S URBAN MILITIAS CARRIED OUT TERRORIST ATTACKS IN TWO DIFFERENT AREAS OF BOGOTA. THE FIRST ATTACK, WHICH TARGETED A GOC MILITARY INSTALLATION, WAS PROBABLY MEANT TO CONFUSE AND DISTRACT THE COLOMBIAN SECURITY SERVICES. SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THE FARC LAUNCHED A SECOND ATTACK ON THE INAUGURATION SITE OF INCOMING PRESIDENT ALVARO URIBE VELEZ AS THE CEREMONY BEGAN. IN ALL, THERE WERE 27 EXPLOSIONS IN BOGOTA RESULTING IN THE DEATHS OF 19 INNOCENT BY-STANDERS; OVER 70 OTHERS WERE WOUNDED. THE ATTACKS WERE WELL PLANNED BUT POORLY EXECUTED, THUS SPARING BOGOTA FROM WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A CATASTROPHIC EVENT. MEANWHILE, FARC BLOCS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY LAUNCHED SMALL-SCALE ATTACKS THAT CAUSED NO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE OR HARM TO CIVILIANS. END SUMMARY.

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DIVERSIONARY ATTACK IN NORTHWEST BOGOTA  
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¶2. (C) AT APPROXIMATELY 1135 HOURS ON AUGUST 7 -- THE MORNING OF PRESIDENT ALVARO URIBE'S MUCH-ANTICIPATED INAUGURATION -- SEVERAL EXPLOSIONS WERE REPORTED NEAR THE JOSE MARIA CORDOBA MILITARY ACADEMY IN THE NORTHWEST AREA OF BOGOTA. IT WAS LATER DETERMINED THAT APPROXIMATELY EIGHT IMPROVISED MORTAR ROUNDS WERE LAUNCHED FROM A RESIDENCE LOCATED AT CALLE 99A, 57A-15. THE IMPROVISED MORTAR ROUNDS DETONATED IN AREAS ADJACENT TO THE MILITARY ACADEMY AND INJURED SEVERAL CITIZENS.

¶3. (C) COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES WERE INITIALLY CONFUSED BY REPORTS OF A GOLD BMW, WHICH WITNESSES CLAIMED DROVE AROUND THROWING EXPLOSIVES. COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE LATER SEARCHED THE ABOVE RESIDENCE AND DISCOVERED 100 METAL LAUNCHING TUBES. OF THE 100, ONLY 8 HAD FIRED.

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ATTEMPTED ATTACK ON PALACE  
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¶4. (C) AT APPROXIMATELY 1510 HOURS, SEVERAL MORE EXPLOSIONS WERE REPORTED IN THE AREA OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AT THE START OF THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL CEREMONY. IT WAS LATER DETERMINED THAT APPROXIMATELY SIX IMPROVISED MORTAR ROUNDS WERE LAUNCHED FROM A RESIDENCE LOCATED AT CARRERA 26B, 4-44. THE IMPROVISED MORTAR ROUNDS DETONATED IN THE AREAS ADJACENT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. ONE LANDED IN THE PARKING LOT, WOUNDING SEVERAL SECURITY OFFICIALS, AND ANOTHER ROUND STRUCK THE FACADE OF THE BUILDING, CAUSING MINOR DAMAGE. THE OTHER MORTAR ROUNDS LANDED IN A POOR RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD AND KILLED 19 PEOPLE.

¶5. (C) COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES SEARCHED THE ABOVE RESIDENCE AND DISCOVERED 80 LAUNCHING TUBES. OF THE 80, ONLY 6 HAD FIRED. ACCORDING TO ATF PERSONNEL WHO WENT TO THE SITE, THE

LAUNCHING TUBES WERE LAID IN CEMENT ON A BACK PATIO. THE PATIO WAS COVERED BY A CORRUGATED PLASTIC ROOF, WHICH PREVENTED OVERHEAD SURVEILLANCE FROM DETECTING THEIR PRESENCE.

16. (C) MILITARY AND POLICE SOURCES BLAME THE FARC URBAN MILITIAS. NO ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE. ACCORDING TO THE ATF, THE DEVICES AT BOTH LOCATIONS WERE IDENTICAL, IMPROVISED MORTAR ROUNDS CONSISTING OF APPROXIMATELY ONE KILOGRAM OF ANFO EXPLOSIVES ENCASED IN AN IRON SHELL WITH DIRECTIONAL FINS WELDED ON. THE ROUNDS WERE LAUNCHED FROM STEEL TUBES APPROXIMATELY 2.5 METERS TALL AND 120 MM IN DIAMETER. THE WELL-MADE LAUNCHING MECHANISM FAILED ONLY BECAUSE THE FARC USED A 12 VOLT BATTERY TO IGNITE THE CHARGE. ACCORDING TO THE ATF, IF THE BATTERY HAD NOT FAILED, ALL OF THE MORTARS WOULD HAVE FIRED. MEANWHILE, IN BOGOTA AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES DEACTIVATED FIVE BOMBS, AND NINE OTHER EXPLOSIVE DEVICES OR GRENADES EXPLODED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

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ATTACKS ELSEWHERE IN COLOMBIA  
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17. (C) ACCORDING TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY, IN OTHER PARTS OF COLOMBIA ON AUGUST 7, THE FARC DETONATED SEVERAL EXPLOSIVE DEVICES, DESTROYED POWER TOWERS, BLEW UP PORTIONS OF THE GAS PIPELINE, AND INITIATED COMBAT IN SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS WITH THE COLOMBIAN ARMY. THREE EXPLOSIVE DEVICES DETONATED IN CALI, CAPITAL OF VALLE DEL CAUCA DEPARTMENT. IN ARMENIA, CAPITAL OF QUINDO DEPARTMENT, FARC MILITIAS DETONATED AN EXPLOSIVE DEVICE AND THREW A GRENADE THAT CAUSED SOME DAMAGE. IN ADDITION, THE FARC DOWNED EIGHT ELECTRIC TOWERS IN RISARALDA, ARAUCA, AND BOYACA DEPARTMENTS, AND BLEW UP A SECTION OF THE GAS PIPELINE NEAR VILLANUEVA, GUAJIRA DEPARTMENT. THE SAME DAY, THE FARC INITIATED COMBAT WITH THE COLOMBIAN ARMY IN ARAUCA, TOLIMA, AND CUNDINAMARCA DEPARTMENTS.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) THE FARC, INTENT ON PULLING OFF A HIGH-PROFILE ATTACK, UNSUCCESSFULLY SOUGHT TO STEAL THE SHOW FROM URIBE ON INAUGURATION DAY. WHILE THE MILITARY AND POLICE HAD IMPRESSIVE SECURITY IN PLACE, THE FARC STILL MANAGED -- PROBABLY OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME -- TO SNEAK AN IMPRESSIVE AMOUNT OF MORTARS WITHIN ABOUT A KILOMETER AND A HALF OF THE INAUGURAL SITE. IN THIS CASE, LUCK WAS ON THE COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCE'S SIDE. THE RESULTS WOULD HAVE BEEN CATASTROPHIC HAD ALL THE LAUNCHING TUBES FIRED. THE MAYOR OF BOGOTA AND MANY OTHER OFFICIALS HAVE OBSERVED THAT THE PUBLIC DID NOT "NOTICE" ANY ACTIVITY, WHICH IS ESPECIALLY SURPRISING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR THE MILITARY SCHOOL -- MIDDLE-CLASS AND FAR MORE SETTLED THAN THE TRANSIENT NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE.

PATTERSON

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